
Walt Stanchfield 42

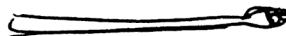
Notes from Walt Stanchfield's Disney Drawing Classes

"Great Performance - Or just a drawing?"

by Walt Stanchfield

“Great Performance - Or just a drawing?”

GREAT PERFORMANCE--OR JUST A DRAWING?



Anatomy of a match



A burnt match

If you had to draw a burnt match you wouldn't say to yourself, "Okay, this is the anatomy of a match:  " No, you would say, "This is a match whose anatomy has been burnt and twisted into an agonizing shape. A shape that if I imagine myself being in that state. If I feel what has happened to that match has happened also to me --then this is the feeling that I have to draw, to portray.

One night we had Lalla posing for us in our gesture class. She is an excellent model who acts out little one pose dramas. One student was making a beautiful drawing of a pose that was similar to the burnt match, but his drawing looked like a woman in repose, rather than in mental and physical agony. I said, "Yours is a nice drawing but that pose is a Kaethe Kollwitz situation." He said, "Who is Kaethé Koilwitz?" She was a Prussian artist who grew up in a period of much conflict. She lived in Germany during Hitler's rise to power, and depicted the tragedies and sufferings of the period.



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Arguments against forming daily habits that guide you through life without having make any new choices are quite numerous. The old adage "use it or lose it" is applicable here. If one has formed pretty solid days worth of habits that carry him through the days and months and years -- he is going to grow smaller and smaller as age sets and the more habitual he is the sooner age will set in.

Someone said, "Change will help keep-the balance sheets in order," or something like that. We're not talking change for the sake of change -- but for improvement. For expanding the consciousness; for an ever fresh and open-minded attitude to your piece of the universe. Habits are a blessing when they relieve us of the burden of having to relearn everything we do every day. But if they lead us down the narrowing road of complacency, they become a drag.

That great teacher and the great guy, T. Hee, told his students to be like a sponge -- soak up all the knowledge and information you can. Never allow yourself to get into a self-satisfied or complacent state. He advised never to drive home from work by the same streets twice. Take alternate routes -- observe the new houses, trees, gardens, etc., and don't just drive by them -- look at them, see them. When walking along a sidewalk, look into the store windows, not just a glance, but a good look, to see what's there - the set up, the merchandise, the signs. Sketch it in the mind's eye. Observe passers by. Notice their walks, their postures, their rhythms -- look for their history on their faces. Observe, observe, observe. And of course there is no better way to observe than to carry a sketch book with you wherever you go.

Whether your heart is set on the fine arts or on animation quick sketching is the shortest route to training yourself for capturing those spontaneous gestures and poses that are so essential to good drawing. Break one of your bad habits today. Which one? The habit of not sketching.

Also relative to drawing is the sharpening of your sense of dramatics and humor and of science and psychology. What are your reading habits? If they are narrow and limited, make a determined effort to expand them. Read a book on acting. Read a mystery; read a book on the life of Pissarro. Have a few books of New Yorker cartoons in your library. Read Van Gogh's "Dear Theo". Read a few self-improvement books. Call 244-2816 once in a while. Listen to some jazz, some symphony, a string quintet, some country music. Stop everything and just listen. There are some delightful irish and scottish recordings. Feel the leaves of a sycamore tree, a wad of cotton, a piece of sandpaper. Pick up a stone from the beach or from the mountains and fondle it. See if it has a message for you. Notice its color and texture, imagine doing an abstract painting of it, or actually do it. Sharpen your senses in all ways. Life will open up its vistas of adventure and courage and venturesomeness. Then when you make a sketch you will feel an authoritative confidence flow into it. It will have the rhythms of the music you have heard, the drama of the books you have read, and the tactile influence of all the things you have touched.

Sounds like a dream? No way! You have been given all these things -- these possibilities, and for the small price of a few new habits ... who knows



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